

CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

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DENMARK

Division of the Diocese of Copenhagen.

Until now one third of the population of Denmark and one fourth of the clergymen of the Lutheran National Church have belonged to the Diocese of Copenhagen, the largest in the Northern countries. The consequence has been an almost inhuman load of work for Bishop Fuglsang-Damgaard who has now been the Primate of the Danish Church for 26 years. Reaching the age of 70 this summer, the Bishop is due to retire and will be followed, not by one, but by two successors as the diocese is to be divided into two.

Last year the Ministry of Church Affairs set down a commission to investigate the possibility to divide the Diocese of Copenhagen. Last month the commission submitted a report suggesting the establishment of a new "Diocese of Kronborg-Bispebjerg", comprising the northern part of Copenhagen and the whole of North Sealand and having the Grundtvig Church at Bispebjerg in Copenhagen as Cathedral. The Diocese of Copenhagen would then include the central parts of the city, Frederiksberg, Amager, Bornholm, the Faroe Isles and Greenland.

The Minister of Church Affairs, Mrs. Bodil Koch, subsequently introduced a Bill in Parliament proposing a division as suggested by the commission and, the Bill having been favourably received by all Parties, it may now be taken for granted that it will be carried.

Millenary of Roskilde Cathedral.

On June 12th-13th the Cathedral of Roskilde plans to observe the millenary of its erection by great celebrations, which will be of a Northern as well as a Danish character, as it is also the millenary of the baptism of the Danish king, Harald Bluetooth, an event of consequence to all the Northern countries.

Careful preparations for the anniversary have been carried on for a long time already. The main event will be the special church service in the old Cathedral on June 12th at which the Danish King and Queen will be present together with numerous representatives of both Church and State in Denmark as well as of the sister churches in the other Northern countries.

Among the events of the celebrations will be a big concert at which will be played works of the composer Weyse who was closely associated with Roskilde. Several thousand visitors are expected during the two days of activities and the speakers will include churchmen from the other Northern countries.

Bible Quotations in Busses.

In the near future posters carrying Bible quotations will be hung in the town busses at Herlev, near Copenhagen. The suggestion of posters to attract the attention of people who do not usually go to church, originated from the parochial council. There will be 8 different posters. The Rector of Herlev, Rev. Johs. Grunderslev, in an interview in the "Kristeligt Dagblad" says that these posters will not directly appeal to people to go to church, but all the posters have a picture of the church at Herlev. There may also be a special poster about church attendance.

Some of the texts are, for instance: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God:", "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?", "Remember the briefness of life, the certainty of death, the length of eternity."

FINLAND

New Orthodox Archbishop in Finland.

The Orthodox Archbishop Herman who is now 82 years old has announced his intention to retire as from July 1st next. His successor will be elected at the Orthodox Synod to be held at Kuopio on August 17th, the Synod being made up of 15 clergymen and 15 laymen and meeting every fifth year. Already five years ago Archbishop Herman wanted to retire, but was persuaded to continue his office.

Besides the Archbishop there are two other Greek Orthodox Bishops in Finland: Bishop Paavali and Bishop Alexander.

Debate About Parliamentary Religious Services.

The Speaker in the Parliament of Finland, the Social-Democrat K. A. Fagerholm, has suggested to the leaders of the political groups that one of the two annual Parliamentary church services should be abolished as a step to rationalize the work of Parliament. Parliamentary procedure prescribes special church services both at the beginning and end of a session and it is the latter of these services which would be abolished.

One of the reasons given is that the two services sometimes come very closely upon each other as the Parliamentary session usually lasts for the greater part of a year. This proposal, however, has not met with approval in all circles. The Swedish speaking members of Parliament have pointed out, among other things, that it is of value for a Parliament to meet twice a year for quiet meditation, to listen to a scripture text and a bishop's sermon addressed particularly to President and authorities, Cabinet and Parliament. Several newspapers mention the fact that neither Mr. Fagerholm nor the First Vice Speaker in Parliament, Mr. Aitio, Communist, are members of the Lutheran National Church, which may possibly explain the proposal. The question has also been raised whether the idea of cutting down the number of Parliamentary church services by half might perhaps have some relation to the fact that the bishops at the last few Parliamentary services have spoken earnestly and vigorously on the responsibility and personal ethics of politicians.

Taking part in the discussion, Mr. Bertel Lindh, M.P., writes in the "Borgåbladet":

"In our secularized time legislature, at least, should not give such an example, but, on the contrary, meet in pleno in the house of God in order to listen on that day at least to the word which will outlive anything that imperfect men may be able to create."

Shortage of Clergymen in Finland.

At present the Lutheran National Church in Finland is short of some 50 clergymen, according to the weekly "Församlingsbladet". The shortage is felt in all the dioceses except Helsinki (Helsingfors) and the Swedish Diocese of Borgå (Porvoo), but most acutely in the Diocese of Lapua (Lappo) where as much as 17 clergymen are needed. In the northernmost Diocese Oulu (Uleåborg) several livings have been vacant for several years due to lack of applicants. In the Archdiocese of Turku (Åbo) there are 6 vacant livings.

Leaders of Evangelical Academies Meet at Järvenpää.

From August 22nd-23rd next the leaders of evangelical academies and laymen's institutes in Europe will meet for a conference at the Laymen's Institute at Järvenpää, the main theme for the conference being: "The Sickness of Society in the Light of the Illness of the Individual". The conference which is expected to be attended by about 60 people, some 20 of these from Finland, will be opened by Professor Rafael Gyllenberg, and among the speakers will be Professor Paul Tillich, Professor Benedetti, Dr. Küttemeyer, Dr. Martti Siirala and Professor Nevanlinna.

Proposal for Ban on Harmful Films.

A Government Committee on film and television has proposed that the legislature concerning pre-censorship of films should be amended to contain a rule making it possible to impose a ban on bad films. Such a ban should cover films encouraging immorality or crime and films which may frighten the spectators or otherwise be harmful to a sound state of mind. At the same time it is suggested that parents should have a greater share or responsibility in deciding which films should be allowed for children.

Finland has joined an international convention according to which immoral films are prohibited by law.

Bible for the President of Finland.

Representatives of the Association of Christian Business Men in Finland, the "Gideon", recently presented the President of the Republic, Dr. Urho Kekkonen, with a beautifully bound Bible and told him of the activities of the association during the 13 years of its existence. By the association 21,000 Bibles have been distributed to hotels, homes of aged, hospitals and prisons.

The letter of dedication accompanying the President's copy says: "We pray that the holy word of this book may be your guiding star in the difficult tasks of your office in the service of our nation. The Bible is the salvation of our people."

Morning Prayers Prior to Compositions for Matriculation.

Every morning at 8 o'clock on the days when senior high school students are to write their compositions for matriculation the Swedish congregation has arranged for short sung Eucharist services at the "Old Church" in Helsinki (Helsingfors), especially intended for the senior students and their relatives.

172 Church Bells in the Radio Archives.

In the course of time the State Broadcasting Service in Finland has collected recordings of 172 of the 650 church bells in the sound-recording archives, and more are constantly being added. Tape recordings are made at every transmission from a church whose bells have not already been recorded and also at other transmissions from places where no church bell recordings have been made.

Proposal for a Special Church Television-Studio.

The weekly "Församlingsbladet" has suggested that a special church television-studio should be furnished in connection with a joint working centre of the congregations in Helsinki (Helsingfors) in order to provide training facilities for speakers at and producers of religious programmes. According to the "Församlingsbladet" there are only 40,000 television spectators as yet, but this number is expected to increase rapidly. So far the religious items in the television-programmes have been very few, but there ought to be more, and the Church must be alive to the great future importance of television. It is therefore also in the interest of the Church to meet the demand for capable television personnel, the paper writes,

ICELAND

New Initiatives in Icelandic Church Life.

As the first in Iceland the Rector of Hafnarfjörður, south of Reykjavik, Rev. Gardar Thorsteinsson, Rural Dean, has arranged a series of special musical church services during the winter for the many people who otherwise only come to church at the high festivals. The response has been overwhelming, the church being overcrowded at the three musical services at which musicians and choristers co-operated free of charge. The minister led the congregation in a short devotional service, some hymns were sung in unison, and the service closed with the Lord's Prayer being said aloud by all, the congregation standing up.

The Rector of Akureyri, Rev. Peter Sigurfeirsson, recently conducted a church week which was attended by so many people that all arrangements broke down. On the last evening 900 people crowded into the church which can seat only 500.

A church service on Boxing Day was announced as a special christening service by the Rector of the Vestmanna Isles, Rev. Johann Llidar. At this occasion 20 children were baptized, an event not known to have happened ever before in Iceland.

NORWAY

The Ecumenical Debate Continues.

The lively discussion within the Norwegian Lutheran National Church about its attitude to the World Council of Churches mentioned in the last number of CN continues unabated.

Once more leading circles within the evangelical Inner Mission have dissociated themselves from the World Council of Churches. Thus a leader in the Inner Mission weekly "For Fattig og Rik" reads as follows:

"As members of the Norwegian Church we are affiliated to the World Council of Churches from a formal point of view. But this membership is of no actual value since we have officially dissociated ourselves from it. We consider the attitude of the World Council of Churches towards liberal theology and other tendencies and the points of view of the Council in general to be incompatible with the fundamental reformatory conception of our Church. For this reason we feel bound by

conscience to dissociate ourselves from the World Council of Churches. We have said so before and we repeat it here and thus have a clear conscience. No-one may rightly put pressure upon us in the name of the World Council of Churches and we ourselves are under no obligation to the World Council of Churches."

In a leading article in the Press Professor Olaf Moe refutes the assertion that participation by a Lutheran Church in ecumenical joint enterprises not resting on "the scriptures alone" should constitute a derailment from the Lutheran conception of the Church. He refers to the fact that Luther recognized the value of tradition and that the Augsburg Confession emphasizes the conformity of the Lutheran doctrine with the early ecclesiastical tradition.

In a couple of articles the head of the Norwegian Church Institute for Foreign Missions, Dr. O.G. Myklebust, Lecturer, opposes the negative attitude to the World Council of Churches taken by the President of the Norwegian Missionary Council, Mr. Tormod Vågen. Dr. Myklebust feels that the Norwegian Missionary Council ought to join in the Foreign Missions Commission which will be a result of the impending integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council, if not as a full member of the Commission, then in a consultative status.

811 Norwegian Missionaries in Active Service.

According to recently published statistics 811 missionaries and their wives, belonging to 18 Norwegian missionary societies, were employed on the mission fields in 1958. The total income of all the societies amounted to app. 18,3 mill. Norwegian crowns. The biggest of the societies is the Norwegian Missionary Society with 278 missionaries in active service.

Organizational Union of all Religious Bodies?

The former President of the Joint Council of Organizations (joint organ for the 22 voluntary organizations within the Norwegian Lutheran National Church). Secretary General Ottar Bondevik, has suggested that all the religious bodies should be organized in one. Church people want a simplified organizing apparatus, he says, and feels that the time has come for an amalgamation of the various Lutheran missionary societies. Having come close to one another spiritually, an organizational fellowship ought now to follow. Secretary General Bondevik feels that by uniting it may be possible to solve in common tasks which must now be left unattempted by the societies individually.

Free Churches Take Stock and Plan for the Future.

At the meeting recently in Oslo of the Joint Council of Evangelical Communities Mr. Martin Ski gave the interesting summary of his evaluation of the present Free Church situation. All the Free Churches have emerged from the revivalist movement, he said, and, although revivalist activity has been very slight during later years, their main task must still be to call to revival. We have seen the Free Churches grow in size, but diminish in spiritual depth. The speaker mentioned the increasing understanding in the Free Churches of their social and cultural responsibilities, but warned against letting these gain prominence over the main issue: to win men for God.

Mr. Ski thought that the present kind of laymen's preaching in the Free Church communities would disappear in the course of the next 10-12 years. Our time demanding properly trained preachers, he advo-

cated the establishment of Free Church theological seminaries at which the instruction should be of the same standard as regards contents and quality as that of the Theological Faculty at the University. The purely doctrinal instruction should be differentiated with regard to the various communities, while the rest of it should be common to all.

A joint Free Church effort in the rapidly growing suburbs of Oslo, also outlined by Mr. Ski, did not meet with any general approval in the ensuing discussion. Such was the case, however, with regard to his suggestion for an integration of the two Free Church organs, the "Dissenters' Council" and the "Joint Council of Evangelical Communities". Any further steps in the matter were left to the executive committee of the Joint Council.

Easter Week Festival in Oslo This Year.

Again this year Easter Week will be celebrated in Oslo as a Festival Week during which a number of religious events will emphasize the special nature of the Week. There will be no less than 5 church play performances, as well as a number of conducted tours of churches and museums giving an impression of "Oslo Then and Now". There will also be a number of musical events, the biggest of them being the performance of Händel's "Messiah" in the Cathedral. The last few years the open air service in the Torshovparken at 8 a.m. on Easter Morning has been so well attended that an additional divine service will be arranged this year in the Uranienborgpark.

Dean Tord Godal is chairman of the committee arranging and planning the Easter Week Festival.

Number of Church Weddings Going up in Oslo.

According to the recent annual report of the Diocese of Oslo the number of marriages before the registrar in Oslo in 1959 amounted to 31 % as against 33,4 % in 1954. The corresponding figures for the Deanery of Oslo, the central part of the Diocese, are 38,8 % and 42,9 %. The report points out that by far the majority of divorced persons re-marrying are married at the registrar's office.

During the same year 143 new members joined the Lutheran National Church while 446 resigned their membership.

The Radio Presents Different Forms for Church Service.

Last month the Norwegian Broadcasting Service began a series of transmissions presenting different forms of church service accompanied by an explanation of the procedure. A Roman-Catholic, a Greek Orthodox, an Anglican, a Reformed, and a Lutheran service are included in the series which will wind up with a transmission of a "20th century church service" - an Anglican service combining modern conceptions of harmonies and rhythm with Gregorian chants. This service has been arranged by an Anglican clergyman, thus trying to meet the needs of young people.

Correction.

In No. 55, page 8, first paragraph under News in Brief, is indicated that "the Council Meeting of the Norwegian Mission Covenant Church has recommended ... that in the future women should have the right of vote". This information refers to Norsk Luthersk Misjonssamband (Norwegian Lutheran Mission), a mission organization in the Lutheran National Church, and not to Det Norske Misjonsforbund (Norwegian Mission Covenant Church), which is one of the Free Churches.

SWEDEN

Interesting Free Church Statistics on Church Attendance.

At the Stockholm Free Church Council meeting late in February the District Leader, Rev. Martin Buchard, said that the Free Church Council recently conducted the first counting of church-goers in Greater Stockholm. It took place on two ordinary, viz. the last two, Sundays in January, and showed that on both days together some 12.200 people took part in the morning services in the 86 Free Church congregations, having altogether 22,700 members, which is a percentage of 54 on the two days.

The investigation in 1956 by the Home Mission Board of the Swedish Lutheran National Church, based on a counting of church-goers during one whole year in the Diocese of Stockholm, showed that 11.000 people on the average attended the morning services in the churches of the Lutheran National Church. Since then the number has gone up considerably, but it will no doubt surprise many that the Free Churches seem to draw practically the same number of listeners as the National Church.

There are altogether 1,1 million inhabitants in Greater Stockholm.

The Idea of a National Church under Debate.

In the Swedish Lutheran National Church the idea of a National Church in its present form is vividly discussed. At a recent meeting in the University of Uppsala both Dean G.A. Danell, Växjö, who is one of the leaders of the Confessional Front, and the Swedish Professor Krister Stendahl, who is now professor at the Harvard University in the U.S.A. and accepts the ordination of women, strongly attacked the National Church as an Institution, each from his own starting point.

Dean Danell characterized the National Church as being a fictitious conception in as much as only 2 - 3 % of the population were active, i.e. church-attending, Christians, and since also the non-active members are eligible for seats in church managements. He was afraid that the State, through the new legislation for the parishes and the new Act about the elections of bishops, would ensure a still firmer hold on the Church.

Professor Stendahl dissociated himself from "the idea of the National Church as an expression of the universality of the Gospel" and emphasized that the conception behind the Act of 1951 about Religious Liberty which makes people members of the National Church by birth and not by baptism is completely wrong. He described this conception as the extreme of the idea of a national church. The Professor made sarcastic remarks about the Church itself actually consenting to becoming a State Church and recommended a solution corresponding to the Free Church policy in the U.S.A.

Debate on Compulsory Attendance in Church During Period of Preparation for Confirmation.

The "Aftonbladet" and the "Stockholms-Tidningen" have both protested against clergymen "compelling" their candidates for confirmation to go to church during the period of preparation. The reason for this is that the Confirmation Committee of the Home Mission Board of the Swedish Lutheran National Church has had some "church attendance cards" printed and recommended them for checking up in special cases, such as for instance, where there is a very large number of candidates. According

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Professor Stenhammar also criticized himself from "the idea of the National Church as an expression of the universality of the Gospel" and emphasized that the conception behind the act of 1951 about Religious Liberty which makes people members of the National Church by birth and not by baptism is completely wrong. He described this conception as the extreme of the idea of a national church. The Professor made sarcastic remarks about the Church itself actually continuing to be a State Church and recommended a solution corresponding to the Free Church policy in the U.S.A.

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to the two papers this has caused great indignation among the parents of the children as such control and compulsion is felt to be incompatible with true Christianity.

In this connection the Secretary General of the Confirmation Committee, Dr. Henrik Ivarsson, says that participation in church services must be an indispensable part of the instruction for confirmation since this is supposed, not only to impart theoretical knowledge, but also to help the young people to live the life of the Church. There is no question of any undue compulsion in as much as it is a completely voluntary matter for the parents to have their children confirmed. But when they have actually been entered for confirmation it must be obligatory to attend not only the classes in religion but also the church services. And here a certain amount of checking up may be necessary in some cases, especially in very large parishos.

News in Brief:

- The author Sven Lidman, who for many years was one of the prominent members of the Swedish Pentecostal Movement, has died, 77 years old.
- A number of M.P.s have brought in a motion about exempting from taxation donations for charity and purposes of public utility.
- At the episcopal election in Lund Dean David Lindquist, Härnösand, obtained 259 votes; Dr. Martin Lindström, Lundsberg, 207; Dean Olle Herrlin, Uppsala, 175; and Dean Yngve Ahlberg, Lund, 173 votes.

Among the names of ecclesiastical officials who have received two-three nominations are: Bishop of Lund, Dr. Martin Lindström, Lundsberg, 207; Dean David Lindquist, Härnösand, 259; Dean Olle Herrlin, Uppsala, 175; and Dean Yngve Ahlberg, Lund, 173.

A long list of such bodies entitled to receive nominations has just been published and is available to all interested parties.

Co-operation between Bishops and the State

At an extraordinary "Bishops' Conference" held at the Danish Lutheran National Church on the 10th of the Ministry of Education in order to deal with the confirmation, especially taking into account the present resulting agreement and the situation in the country. The point of view is as much as the people will be asked to confirm the day twice a week by attending church, the confirmation. In smaller parishes with confirmation, the number the previous instruction must be at least 10. In big parishes where confirmation, the number may be 30 lessons.

At the same Conference the Bishops and a number of public school teachers of religion discussed the problem of instruction in the curriculum, and a number of resolutions were adopted to deal with a number of problems of instruction.

This joining of forces by the Bishops and public school teachers has been approved by the "Fristiligt Råd" (Fristiligt Råd) which may prove a fruitful effort to deal with the problem of instruction. Instances of co-operation between the church and the state have been of a local nature.

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